

APR 11 1977
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THE WASHINGTON POST
 25 September 1977

CIA Testing Eye-Brain Links

Associated Press

A San Diego hospital has been conducting experiments for the Central Intelligence Agency for two years on how the human brain reacts to what the eyes see, a CIA spokesman said yesterday.

But CIA spokesman Dennis Berend denied published reports that the \$100,000-a-year contract with the Children's Hospital and Health Center was to develop a sophisticated lie detector system that electronically probes the brain.

"The contract we have is not a lie detector thing at all," he said. "It's so that we can better understand how the human brain absorbs and processes information... how the brain interprets visual materials."

The project involves what are called evoked cortical potentials. Berend said it is hoped the program will benefit CIA analysts in interpreting

photographs "and other visual information they have to work with."

The hospital is a pioneer in work on visually evoked responses.

"I want to stress that no children and no drugs are involved," Berend said. "They are following very strict existing federal guidelines on medical research involving humans. I'm sure [the Health, Education and Welfare Department] was consulted."

HEW controls those research guidelines.

The hospital's research director, Dr. Albert Lawrence, is supervising the experiments at the facility's speech, hearing and neurosensory center, using volunteers from among the staff and friends.

The responses in the cortex of the brain to what the eyes see are electronically recorded from brain waves and analyzed by computers, the San

Diego Union reported in its Saturday editions.

The volunteers respond to pictures of faces flashed on screens with each picture evoking a different brain wave pattern. The computer can then determine which pictures are familiar and which are not even if the subject says nothing, the newspaper said.

Lawrence also has paired names and faces and has presented logical problems for which true or false answers produce certain brain waves, the newspaper said. Using a good computer, he was quoted as saying, the brain wave confirmation of material presented to the volunteers can be available in one minute.

The experiments have an accuracy rate of 80 per cent so far, Lawrence said.

He said that his final report to the CIA, which he is preparing, will be made public.